



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness
Affirming our essential unity with nature

Volume 26, Number 1 • January-February 2013

One Week at Doha

by Oliver Robertson

Associate Representative at QUNO
and QEW Representative to COP 18

It always seems impossible until it is done
– Nelson Mandela

THIS IS ONE OF THE INSPIRING phrases sitting on my desk at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva, a desk more than 4,500 kilometres from the Qatar National Convention Centre. The impressive Centre was the venue for the 18th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held November 26 to December 7, 2012, in Doha.

This was the first time QUNO has attended these COPs, but this is not QUNO's first foray into environmental negotiations – it played an important behind-the-scenes role over several years around the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Other Friends have been coming to the climate change talks for years: some as negotiators or other delegates, others under the banner of Quaker Earthcare Witness. But, having heard calls from several sources over several years for Quakers to help more directly with the climate talks, this year QUNO responded. We attended a between-sessions meeting of the UNFCCC in Bonn, Germany, last May, spoke to diplomats in Geneva and New York, and produced a short paper that drew on our knowledge of other UN bodies. All with the overarching message: *How can we help?*

COP 18 was huge and dispersed. Around 11,000 people were expected to attend, working in seven negotiation streams (as opposed to the one or two that UN talks usually have). It is perhaps fitting, therefore, that the venue itself was cavernous, a vast edifice of glass, marble, plastic, and metal. Almost a dozen halls, each thousands of metres square, housed plenary chambers, smaller side event rooms, and rows of civil society stalls. It took 15 minutes to walk from one end of the complex to the other.



*UN Climate Change Conference in Doha.
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“The inequality in the world inhabits the halls where these negotiations go on,” said one of Oxfam’s representatives. You can see it physically. One hall contained the offices and pavilions of different countries, but not all of them. Many European governments had offices, as did the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China), the Gulf, and the other Western states. Aside from this, there was one other African office, that of Kenya, one Small Island Developing State (Nauru), and none from Latin America.

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If you want to meet anyone else, you have to catch them as they come out of meetings or run into them in the corridors.

The focus of our activities in the UNFCCC was not the details of the discussions (though we did sit in on meetings, because knowing how something works is important if you're interacting with it). We are not technical experts and probably do not need to be: there were literally thousands of people in Doha who know their CP2s from their CDMs and can spot a QELRO at 50 paces. Instead, we wanted to support the process and help build trust between parties, which is the same kind of work we have been doing at the UN for more than 60 years. In our experience, this works best (or perhaps only) when the participants know one another and can build personal relationships. Building these relationships is exceptionally difficult when negotiators are based in their national capitals and come together only a few times a year for two weeks of intense negotiations.

But we certainly won't achieve anything if we don't try, so QUNO's staff emailed diplomats we knew, drew on Quaker links with others, and went knocking on doors. And, through a mixture of hard work and



Canadian Youth at COP 18 support the Philippines. 2012 Creative Commons by MVI.

serendipity, ways began to open. Diplomats took time to talk with us, contacts led to other contacts, and we did, on occasion, bump into someone going up an escalator. Many shared our analysis of the problems and even offered some thoughts as to possible ways forward, but no clear next step emerged. Presumably, if the answer were obvious, it would already be in place (though the failure to adequately act to prevent climate change, despite knowing what is needed, does show this isn't always the case).

I found it interesting that the "flavour" of the conference changed as the week went on. During the

first couple of days, before detailed negotiations got underway, we had more interactions with diplomats, and the stacks of QUNO publications in our stall quickly disappeared. But later the tenor changed, as diplomats spent more time sealed off in closed negotiating sessions and non-government representatives left to speak to each other at side events. The quality of our discussions with government representatives was as good as ever; it was just that the length and frequency of meetings declined.

Other work pressures meant that we couldn't stay at COP 18 for the second week, which is less likely to be effective because government ministers arrive and they really *are* hard to meet. So we returned to Geneva, ready to follow up with contacts made and to digest and reflect on what we've experienced. No doubt we will need to continue our conversations in the months to come. If Friends know of diplomats or others engaged in the talks, please let us know, as some of the most helpful conversations we had were with people already familiar with Quakers, who understand how we work and what we do. As for the rest, we shall see.

What will ultimately arise from our participation at COP 18 in Doha? We might move to action, we might continue to observe and consider, and we might decide not to carry on. It could be that this is not the way Friends are called to witness to climate change and that not everything that needs to be done, needs to be done by Quakers. But what can be done is for Friends to offer, in prayer and action, their support for those engaged in the climate talks. Many of the negotiators feel the same fears and frustrations as the people looking on, and they need our encouragement as they try to achieve what must sometimes feel like an impossible task.

Oliver is associate representative at the Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva. He attended the COP in Doha with QUNO Geneva director Jonathan Woolley, in the name of QEW. A version of this article originally appeared in the Friend, the weekly Quaker magazine in Britain www.thefriend.org.

**We wanted
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by Mary Gilbert
QEW Representative to the UN

I'VE BEEN GOING TO THE UNITED NATIONS for 12 years now, witnessing how the nations of the world deal with human impact on our planet's health. Everyone acknowledges that certain problems, such as ocean acidification, sea level rise, unprecedented flooding and drought are global and cannot be addressed by nation-states on their own. At the UN, which was set up to help nations work together, it has become clear to most civil society UN-watchers that the countries appear unable to leave behind narrow national interests to make effective decisions based on the general good.

The View from the Grass Roots

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like QEW represent ordinary people around the world who have a lot to say about decisions that affect their lives. We are finding that being heard is almost impossible. When it happens, what we say is mostly ignored. Here is an example.

In the fall of 2011 the UN asked all nations, all branches of the UN, *and all groups within civil society*, for input to be considered for inclusion in the first draft of what would become the Outcome Document from June 2012's Rio+20 summit. Hard work by informed people went into the submissions, but the draft that emerged in January contained language only from select nations and from the corporate world. By the time Rio came around, special interests had added to the document, and despite strong struggles by poor nations, a lot of what was good in earlier drafts had been deleted. There are a few places in the Outcome Document that are hopeful, but in general it is a disappointment for civil society.

The authors of those sophisticated submissions from last fall, and similar "think pieces" put together by dedicated minds, don't want their thoughts collecting dust on shelves. There is a movement bubbling up in differ-

ent places around the world to put together collective statements expressing what kind of world ordinary people want, and to nurture a growing civil society voice that can speak as one. Some submissions originally prepared for the Outcome Document are feeding into this effort. Here are some examples:

- **Peoples' Sustainability Treaties.** In mid October Patricia Chernoff and I attended a five-day workshop on creating a Sustainability Treaties platform that could be the basis of a united global citizens' voice. Open-invitation "circles" are drafting planks for this platform. Fourteen Sustainability Treaties were brought to Rio in June, not to the official UN negotiations, but to a separate forum that was not choked with procedural obstacles to speaking and being heard. Here is a link to a website that lists the 14 treaties: <http://sustainability-treaties.org/draft-treaties/>.
- **IBON International / Rights for Sustainability (R4S).** In October 2012 R4S held a *Beyond Rio+20: Global Civil Society Workshop* in Nairobi. Antonio Tujan, International Director of IBON, describes the initiative as "a Southern-led campaign that is grounded in grassroots struggles while engaging with the official processes related to the post-2015 development agenda." From the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service publication at: http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=amd10&id_article=4146.

The importance of its being "Southern-led" is that voices from "the Global South," especially non-government voices, are hardly heard in international discussions. This group will meet again in Bonn in early 2013. Germany has offered to pay transportation and visa costs for representatives from money-poor southern organizations.

- **CIVICUS** (<http://www.civicus.org/>) is based in South Africa but is truly global. I attended a five-day CIVICUS meeting in September and became an individual member. (Please see my article in the November/December issue of *BeFriending Creation* for my impressions.) I haven't yet read through their latest proposal, but it's another serious effort to create a global citizens' voice.

These affiliations are doing what they are doing because it is time. Some organizations are working independently of the UN and some are dedicated to working within the UN system. They are in supportive, close touch with each other.



A panel during a workshop at Ramapo College on the Peoples' Treaties.

The view from the Alps

The World Economic Forum (WEF), often called "Davos" because it meets annually in a Swiss resort by that name, is made up of 1000 multinational corporations. Some multinationals have larger incomes than quite a few nations joined together. They have unprecedented power. The WEF sees that most decisions with global impact are already being made by multinational corporations, which are beyond the jurisdiction of governments. These corporations plan to be around for a long time, and they plan to be in charge.

In fall 2012 the WEF published a proposal they call "Everybody's Business: Strengthening International Cooperation in a More Interdependent World." Their proposal would put corporations formally in charge of governance on global issues. They say they would then be able to rein in irresponsible corporations that are pushing the planet beyond sustainable limits. The WEF recommends that the current G20 be acknowledged as co-leaders with corporations.

The WEF envisions a very limited role for civil

society. They see NGOs that agree with them as explaining the rationale for WEF decisions to citizens around the world. This one-way flow of information would be the exact opposite of the participation in decision-making that civil society wants.

My discussion here is a gross oversimplification, and I encourage you to learn more. Here are three links:

- The first takes you to the full WEF proposal: <http://www.weforum.org/reports/everybody%E2%80%99s-business-strengthening-international-cooperation-more-interdependent-world>.
- The second takes you to a short article about the proposal: <http://uncsd.iisd.org/guest-articles/a-post-nation-state-proposal-from-davos/>.
- The third takes you to a Readers Guide that will spare you the necessity of reading the whole 600 pages: www.umb.edu/gri.

What To Do?

The world *does* know what to do to facilitate the healing of our beloved planet, as well as why we should be doing it. The UN has established a Harmony With Nature website: <http://harmonywithnature@un.org/>, through which is found the latest Harmony With Nature Report from August 2012: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/317.

At this point the nations are not up to the job of heeding it, and both the corporate world and the grass-roots world recognize that.

A new dialogue may be needed here, between the multinational corporations and ordinary people. The corporations are coming out of the closet as the actual decision-makers, and the citizenry of the world is developing both strength and voice.

Uchita de Zoysa of Sri Lanka, originator of the Peoples' Sustainability Treaties, says, "Time will tell. The question is, what should we be doing while we are waiting for time to tell?"



Uchita de Zoysa

A note about the final quote: This is something Uchita said at the five-day session on the Peoples Sustainability Treaties I attended in October. Uchita is a Sri Lankan national with wide respect around the world. He's one of those who wants to develop a voice outside the UN constraints, but he works easily with other NGOs and UN staff. For more about Uchita, please visit http://www.csradiologue2012.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83&Itemid=90.

Thank You, Louis!

DEDICATION TO EARTHCARE has been Louis Cox's mantra. Louis has been the Publications Coordinator for Quaker Earthcare Witness for years. But his dedication and imagination have expanded this role far beyond its original intent.

The biggest part of Louis's job has been writing and editing our publication *BeFriending Creation*. Although it started as mimeographed sheets, since I have known it, BFC has become a professional, color production. Thanks to Louis's expertise, it is well written, professionally edited, and beautiful. Comparing it to other Friends' publications which have much larger budgets, BFC wins hands down!

A number of years ago QEW (or was it still Friends Committee on Unity with Nature then?) decided that it would be good to have an Internet presence. Louis volunteered to develop the website for QEW. I remember sitting in a meeting at which there was some criticism of the new website, although there was overwhelming approval. Then it came out that Louis did not have years of experience in website production. He had bought a book on the subject, and read it, and ours was his very first attempt in the field! Innovation is another of Louis's strong points.



Many of us have visited the home of Louis and Ruah Swennerfelt, his wife and former General Secretary of QEW. They put faith into practice by living simply and having little impact on the Earth. Electricity comes from solar panels, water from a developed spring, and much of their food from their beautiful garden. The last time I was there I saw a huge metal tank Louis had saved from the junk yard. Recently I saw pictures of that same tank installed as a rainwater reservoir, with hoses that feed water to the garden to get it through dry spells. This is typical of Louis's inventiveness, and his ethic of recycling. Truly he lives lightly on the Earth!

Watching Louis in QEW meetings, I have sometimes wondered if he was awake. Then, if he was asked a question, I knew that he has been tracking the conversation perfectly. Sometimes the answer would appear in the next issue of *BeFriending Creation*, along with an excellent summary of the discussion he wasn't sleeping through. I certainly appreciate Louis's quiet example and inspiration during his long tenure with QEW. I am not sure what his next role in life will be, but I am sure that Louis can look back with pride at what he has done for Quaker Earthcare Witness. And I am equally sure that he will continue his role in caring for the Earth.

—Dick Grossman
Continuing Counsel Clerk

Welcome, Katherine!

QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS IS PLEASED to welcome Katherine Murray as our new Publications Coordinator. She comes to us with a wealth of writing, publishing, and fundraising experience and a deep appreciation for spiritual ecology. Katherine and Louis worked together to produce this issue of *BeFriending Creation*, helping to make this a smooth transition. Katherine has been writing and publishing both in print and online—with her help, we will be expanding our online outreach through our website, our Facebook page, and more. For example, one way you can help her spread the word about QEW is to share her posts with your Facebook network. We are fortunate to have found a new Publications Coordinator with her depth of experience and her enthusiasm.

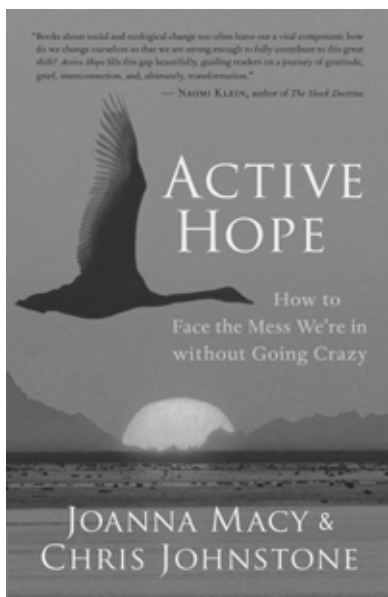
Katherine's spirituality is based on her deep connection to nature from an early age. She is a

member of First Friends Meeting in Indianapolis and has experienced in a profound way many other religious traditions. She holds a Master of Divinity degree from Earlham School of Religion.

Many, many thanks to those who participated in the search for our Publications Coordinator. Roy Taylor clerked the Search committee, made up of Anne Mitchell, Carol Barta, Judy Lumb, Eric Joy, and myself. Our spirits were lifted with the number of well-qualified and interesting people who applied for the position, and we made connections with three very special people whom we interviewed. With the recommendation of the Search committee, the Continuing Council Committee approved hiring Katherine Murray in October.

I am pleased and excited that we have added Katherine to our staff.

—Shelley Tanenbaum
Clerk

*from Friends***Eco-Resources**

Bringing Hope & Action to Our Earth Witness

by
Dick Grossman
Durango, Colorado
Monthly Meeting

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.

Aldo Leopold
Sand County Almanac

OUR CO-HOUSING COMMUNITY is on ranch land, much of which has been abandoned to wild-life. Our housing cluster is in the middle of this beautiful land. Unfortunately, there are several fence lines with rusted barbed wire presenting hazards to man and animals alike. One of my favorite meditations is to harvest that hazard for recycling. This summer, while avoiding getting stuck, I realized that I was grieving the state of the environment

and immediately I knew what to do about it. Joanna Macy to the rescue!

Dr. Macy is in her mid-80s. She has become the guru of dealing with environmental grief. The subtitle of her latest book, **Active Hope**, says it well: "How to face the mess we're in without going crazy."

The book, written with British psychiatrist Chris Johnstone, presents a model for dealing with environmental grief. They recommend starting by expressing gratitude for what you have, then recognizing your grief for what is missing, seeing new possibilities with new eyes, and finally going forth with action.

Perhaps the most important step is to become aware of your grief. Dr. Macy feels that many of us carry a significant weight of grief but are unaware of it or don't know what to do about it.

Environmental grief can be serious. A year and a half ago, I stood on the street corner with a Friend during our weekly peace demonstration. Frank and I exchanged the usual "how are you's" and then settled into intermittent conversation. We had dinner together that evening. I felt no evidence that Frank was depressed, but a couple of weeks later he killed himself. Part of the cause of his depression was sadness over our environmental condition.

For me, going forth with action has been a key to my sanity. I recognize that we are fortunate to live in an amazing period of history, but I have serious concerns about the future we are leaving our progeny. I have sought, and found, new possibilities for improving our world. They include belonging to QEW, inventing a rip-stop condom, writing a newspaper column on the environment, and teaching a college

class named, "People and the Planet." Indeed, my activism has always helped me deal with my environmental grief.

Dr. Macy grew up intellectually during the era that defined cybernetics and wrote her doctoral thesis on Systems Theory and Buddhism (I would love to understand that relationship!). This helps explain why she chose the four-step model she describes in **Active Hope**. It follows the model of cybernetics, which was originally called "circular causal relationship." In this model, one step provides corrections for the other steps in a circular fashion, creating a feedback loop. For some people, the four steps that Macy and her co-author describe are all necessary. I prefer a more streamlined approach.

Here is my simpler approach: recognize that we're in a heap of trouble and then do something about it. That is why I harvest and recycle barbed wire. It is also why the Transition Town movement is so appealing.

But that simple two-step model doesn't deal well with grief. Something more is needed when one

recognizes that we are falling behind in our efforts to prevent planetary degradation. There are myriad uplifting stories in **Active Hope** that will provide models—and offer inspiration—for examples of action we can take.

One of my favorite examples of action is that of Ali Howard, who swam all 380 white-water miles of the Skeena River in Canada. She did this to bring attention to threats of drilling and fracking for gas in the Skeena's headwaters.

Yes, Active Hope is a remedy for environmental sadness. Just knowing that you are not alone in experiencing this grief is a large step in the right direction. I get the feeling, however, that dealing with environmental grief will not be remembered as Joanna Macy's greatest work. She also teaches the importance of cooperation rather than competition, the need to slow damage to the Earth and all its beings, and how a shift of consciousness is essential. Altogether, Macy refers to this work she calls The Great Turning, as "the essential adventure of our time: the shift from the industrial growth society to a life-sustaining civilization."¹

¹ Source: <http://www.joannamacy.net/talks-by-joanna/82-audio/254-joanna-on-seachange-radio.html>



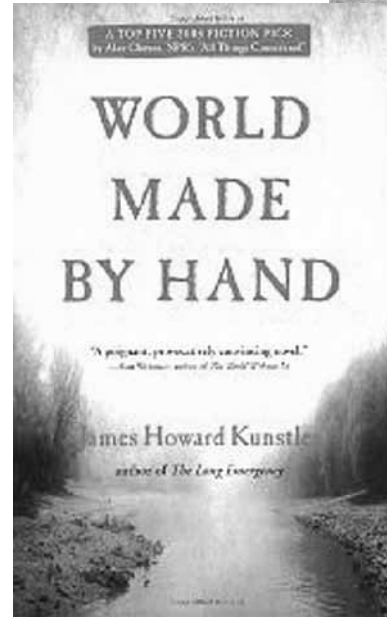
A City of Two Tales

by Louis Cox
Burlington, Vermont
Friends Meeting

THE INTERNATIONAL Transition Towns movement has been growing rapidly, partly because of its positive, hopeful message about communities becoming more resilient and self-reliant in the face of energy, climate, and economic challenges ahead. As one leader in the movement put it, "We want it to feel more like a neighborhood block party than a protest rally."

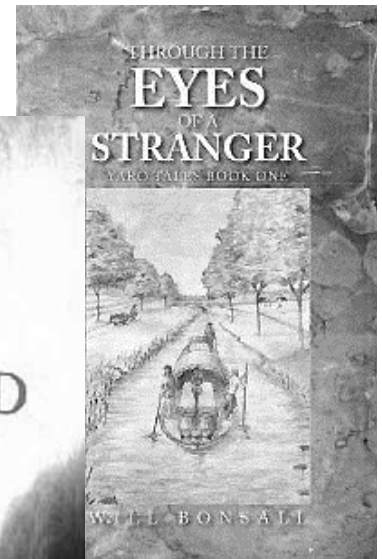
Yes, there are many injustices and imminent dangers in today's world that urgently need to be confronted. But eco-psychologists tell us that negative appeals like fear and guilt tend not to work as well as positive ones. The gloomier our prophecies, the more powerless people feel. The more we point the finger of blame, the deeper into denial people descend. The more we resort to us-versus-them rhetoric, the less likely we are to reach bipartisan agreement on workable solutions.

Nevertheless, I have to confess that it has been difficult for me to make a personal transition to an optimistic outlook in the daunting grip of what author Richard Heinberg calls "Peak Everything." Coming of age during the Cold War, I was exposed to many alarms about



real and imagined threats to my health, freedom, and safety—atomic attack drills at school, reports of millions of children starving in China, reading George Orwell's dystopian novel **1984** in my teens, etc. And I probably watched too many monster and horror movies.

Several years ago, I went into a bookstore to get another "fix" on my doomsday-scenario interest. I asked for James Howard Kunstler's novel, **World Made by Hand**. It had been promoted as a kind of a retake on Orwell's **1984**, about survivors in North America following global ecological and economic collapse and the breakdown of social order. The bookstore didn't have a copy but I was persuaded by the



manager to try another, more upbeat title, Will Bonsall's **Through the Eyes of a Stranger**.

The setting of Bonsall's upbeat book is a post-collapse society based on Earth stewardship principles, hard work, and simple pleasures. Yaro, a refugee from a neighboring fascist state, observes that citizens of this egalitarian and decentralized society believe in free markets and love to use technology to make life easier, but they keep it appropriate and sustainable. They don't practice any form of organized religion but everyone seems to assume an underlying moral order that gives purpose and meaning to life. They are prepared to defend themselves against invaders, but they keep the peace

mainly by being valued trading partners. Social cohesion is maintained through the efforts of a guild of “vision keepers,” who remind everyone that the sum of happiness and well-being is greater when everyone cooperates to keep the whole Earth community healthy and in good order.

Bonsall’s version of the Peaceable Kingdom sounds a lot like many Transition Town supporters’ vision of a just and ecologically sustainable world. While I could fancy myself, like Yaro, adjusting fairly well to such a placid, pastoral way of life, on the whole I didn’t find the book’s characters or plot very believable. For everyone to be so ethical, enlightened, and rational didn’t seem natural. While providing interesting food for clarification of values, the plot seemed too contrived and the setting too far in the future to serve as a practical roadmap to the foreseeable future.

Back to **World Made**

by Hand, which I got around to reading a couple of years later: I found Kunstler’s hot, post-petroleum landscape to be chaotic, perilous, and brutal. Pandemics, starvation, and nuclear terrorism have decimated the population. Technology, commerce, transportation, education, health-care, and communications have been thrown back to the 18th century and beyond. Elected government has been largely replaced by warlords. Confusion and fear have pushed many into the clutches of autocratic religious cults. Enclaves of survivors are scraping out spare livings by manual labor and scavenging.

The only good news, from a Gaian perspective, is that the skies and waters, relieved of the burdens of industrial society’s wastes and “resource” extractions, have cleared up and fish and wildlife populations are rebounding.

One thing I did find somewhat compelling

about Kunstler’s scenario is that the general economic and social breakdown looks a lot like what is already happening in many parts of the world today—think of Haiti, Congo, Afghanistan, even Mexico. And many of the book’s characters sound like real people that I have known. What seriously compromises the book’s credibility, however, is its failure to acknowledge any of the countless restorative social and ecological organizations striving to make a difference in the world today (such as the Transition Town movement and 350.org) that Paul Hawken talks about in his book **Blessed Unrest**. Many of these basically optimistic grassroots efforts are trying to take back local control from undemocratic, globalized systems, either to prevent major collapse or at least ensure a “soft landing.”

So I am on the lookout for another work of “future fiction” that might reconcile the starkly con-

trasting scenarios in these two novels and help me feel more optimistic about life in a “Peak Everything” world. Something from a Quaker perspective might fill the bill. To succeed, it would need realistic characters that readers could identify with and a plausible script. If the setting is a Transition Town, it would have at least one ingredient of an exciting cliff-hanger—uncertainty about whether the future will turn out more like Bonsall’s than Kunstler’s. It might be cleverly titled, *A City of Two Tales*. As movement founder Rob Hopkins says on page 17 of his non-fiction **The Transition Companion**, “Transition is not a known quantity. We truly don’t know if Transition will work.... [It] is a social experiment on a massive scale... built around people who are learning by doing,... who understand that we can’t sit back and wait for someone else to do the work. People like you, perhaps....”

Think Globally, Act Locally

by Carolyn Hiatt

Indianapolis First Friends Meeting, Indiana

AS A LIFELONG QUAKER and a person who is passionate about the environment, I am pleased that I have resources I trust regarding recycling, tips for green living and other topics about caring for the Earth. Two of the resources are local. I get valuable information from the publication, *Indiana*

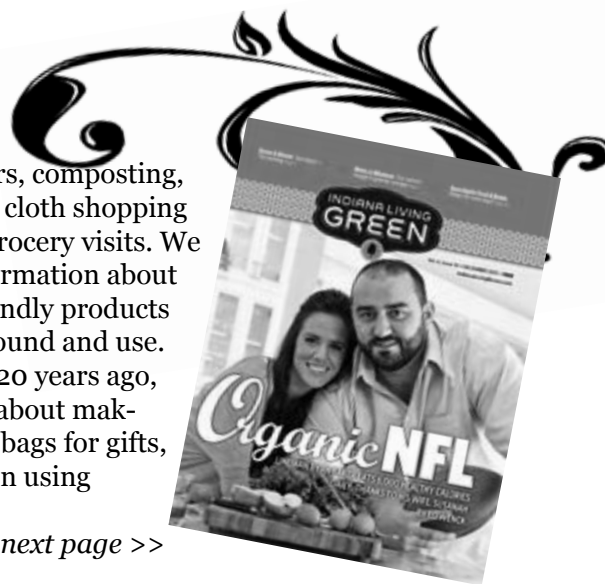
Living Green and the organization, Keep Indianapolis Beautiful. I am also a member of Green America, www.greenamerica.org.

Many things inspire me, including my daughter Kim Mai and her commitment to Earthcare. A resident of California, she has been recycling for

many years, composting, and using cloth shopping bags for grocery visits. We share information about Earth-friendly products we have found and use.

About 20 years ago, I learned about making fabric bags for gifts, rather than using

Locally, next page >>



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holiday paper. I don't sew well, but Kim Mai is an excellent seamstress and has been making beautiful bags for holiday gift giving and also for birthdays. We buy holiday fabric that is on sale at the end of the season and use it for the bags. For birthday gifts bags, we can repurpose shirts, dresses, and other garments, or buy fabric remnants.

This has been a family tradition for the past two decades. Not only does this help the environment, but "bagging" gifts rather than using paper saves so much time! I've also been inspired to give wedding gifts of Earth-friendly products to the newlyweds, using a First Friends grocery bag instead of gift wrap.

I do believe all these steps make a difference, not only in our lives and our children's lives, but also in that we are teaching our four grandchildren valuable lessons in Earthcare.

When Will We Wake?

by Angela Manno

Fifteenth Street Meeting, Manhattan, New York

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN about the dangerous, destructive, and morally untenable practice of hydraulic fracturing for natural gas. Many Friends would agree it's time to stop such practices that are violating the Earth and switch to sustainable sources of energy—wind, water, and solar. Yet after all we have learned about the ill effects of extreme extraction—from an outright assault on our democracy, freedom of speech, property rights, human and ecological health—plus all we know of the beauty and integrity of the natural world, Friends for the most part are still sitting on the sidelines.

What is the source of Friends' failure to take corporate action on behalf of the planet? Why are Friends still so reluctant to take a stand in the face

of the literal evisceration and shattering of our larger body—the Earth—through hydraulic fracturing?

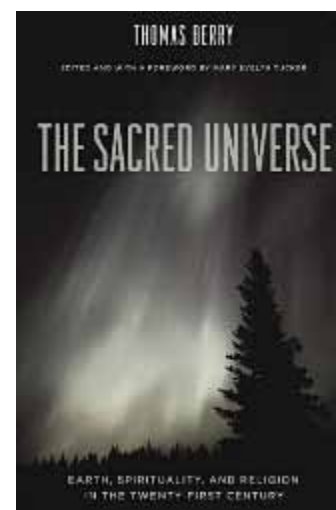
The answer is not in a lack of knowledge. Friends are, I believe, quite cognizant of the problems—or they could be. The Quaker Earthcare Witness discussion list-serv provides an endless stream of news on the growing concerns and coming ravages of climate change, overpopulation, genetic engineering, hydrofracking, tar sands strip mining, and more.

Albert Einstein said, "Those who have the privilege to know have the duty to act." Why, then, do so many Friends continue to shirk this grave responsibility?

To unblock the floodgates to action, we must first examine our uncon-

scious fears and the errors in our thinking.

In my search for answers, I found that the most likely causes for inaction—both Quaker and non-Quaker—can be explained in the writings of Quaker activist George



Lakey and eco-theologian Thomas Berry.

As I have investigated these two seminal

Wake, next page >>

2013 QEW Mini-Grant Applications Now Being Accepted

We will now accept applications for Friends projects which

- Improve your immediate environment
- Involve members young, old, and in between
- Reduce carbon footprints
- Create opportunities to learn about your own local ecosystems
- Enrich your local community
- Provide meaningful work and create FUN for all participants

We welcome your project ideas and energies. If your meeting or Friends organization has an idea for a project, let us know. If non-Quaker members of our community become involved, so much the better. Should you feel the need to talk with us to develop a project, give me a call or send an email. We will match funding up to \$350. Our application form can be found online at www.quakerearthcare.org. We want to encourage your good work and best intentions toward your environment, your community, and your selves, all as integrated parts of our One Lovely and Divine Planet.

—Bill Holcombe, Clerk, QEW Mini-Grants [Email: bhole7@hotmail.com; Phone: 203 313 4438]

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thinkers, and as I have searched my own heart, I have come to believe that most Friends do not take action beyond our personal realms (what George Lakey calls “earning Quaker merit badges by personal lifestyle choices rather than asking how much difference one is making in the movement’s struggle for macro-level change”)² because of a fundamental confusion about our true identity as Homo sapiens (a cosmological question) and the unconscious limitations imposed by Friends’ respective social class (the domain of social science).

The primary error in our thinking, it seems to me, lies in the misconception that we are somehow separate from or “above” the Earth and all its life. As I wrote once to explain “why I care” to a group of Westchester Friends, “If you consider yourself separate from the Earth, from Gaia, the being in whom we live and move and have our being, then confusion sets in when you see the Earth in peril. But if you feel yourself to be part of the organism, of the larger being called Earth, it is a matter of self-care to want to preserve the beauty and well-being of the planet.”

My query deepened: What is the source of this sense of separation that pervades our religious

society and society at large, that keeps Friends mostly silent and immobile in the face of the poisoning of our planet? I noted that Friends were able to step up to the plate when the immorality of slavery finally became clear. What, then, makes the destruction of the Earth—the living host of all we know, the very source of the next breath we take—somehow less offensive in the eyes of Friends?

A major cause is species-centered narcissism, also known as *anthropocentrism*. In his Schumacher lecture “Every Being Has Rights,” Thomas Berry proclaimed that our love had become too narrow. “It has been narrowed to the human instead of including the whole of the universe, as it once was in the Christian teaching.”

We contend not only with our radical discontinuity with the rest of Creation. We are also unconsciously bound by our class distinctions. In his article for the January–February 2012 *Quaker Eco-Bulletin*, George Lakey writes that, “middle class culture supports fitting in, being restrained. It was hard for nurses and teachers historically, to form unions, because they didn’t want to appear ‘unprofessional’ in the eyes of the world, since ‘professional’ is performed by appearing smooth and not making waves. . . . Quakers who stay in their middle class bubble guar-

antee the ineffectiveness of which they complain.”

His words awakened something in me. I reached out to George to find out more. He explained that “no amount of consciousness-raising or discussion can ever take the place for Quakers of getting their bodies out of the chair and in motion, outside their comfort zone, taking a stand. One reason why a vigil is a waste of time for Quakers these days is that it is a ritual—the kind of ritual that early Friends scorned when they saw Anglicans doing it. Friends need to act, in situations of uncertainty, where they are slightly out of control, where nicely phrased locution is not the currency.”³

In light of this new awareness, never having been a student of social science and belonging to the middle-to-owning class myself, it was interesting to consider my own resistance to nonviolent direct action. More burdensome, as a victim of child abuse I had no desire to ever again be a victim of “the Man” by getting myself arrested and perhaps being helpless and abused with no way out. Yet I understood how facing my worst fears might redeem a lifetime of conflict avoidance. The answer, George told me, is to keep remembering, “I am not alone. Others will help me,” contradicting the message from my

class background.

In contrast to the middle-class tendency to shy away from conflict, early Friends embraced and cultivated it. They used conflict to create a stir, to bring injustice into the light. Quaker history is full of examples of conflict cultivation, from women’s suffrage, to civil



rights, to the abolition of slavery.

This conflict aversion affects not only many Friends but middle class environmentalists as well, including the class of big name environmental organizations that veteran organizer Bill Moyer, the author of *Doing Democracy* (a handbook of essential reading that maps the structure of successful social movements), calls “Professional Opposition Organizations.” George Lakey explains: “Even with the cliff edge of climate change staring middle class environmentalists in the face, most are reluctant to return to the strategy used in their biggest U.S.

² Lakey, George. “Quaker Eco-Justice Strategy: Equality and the Experiment of the Earth Quaker Action Team,” *Quaker Eco-Bulletin*, Vol 12, No 1, Jan-Feb 2012.

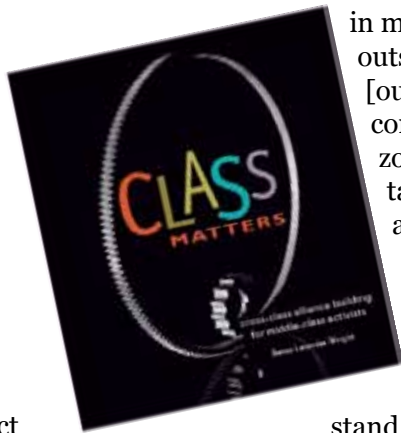
³ Lakey, George. Personal correspondence with the author.

victory, which they won against all odds, the 1970s nonviolent direct action campaign against nuclear power.”

In recent times we’ve learned that a number of established environmental advocacy groups have compromised what they stand for, quite possibly to avoid the conflict that inevitably will emerge if we act to safeguard the Earth’s living systems from the ravages of tar sands strip mining, nuclear energy, hydraulic fracturing, deep-water drilling, mountaintop removal, and genetic engineering.

We must each examine where we are

unwilling to make waves, when our consciences dictate it’s time to move our bodies “out of the chair and in motion, outside [our] comfort zone, taking a



stand.”

However, George offers us not only his critique but also uplifting solutions: “Brought up owning class? Great—bring the gifts (vision, big picture, aesthetics) often cultivated in the owning class, and let go of the isolation and need to control. Brought up middle

class? Great—bring the gifts (optimism about making an individual difference, process skills, articulateness) and let go of both the obsession to fit in and conflict aversion. Brought up working class? Great—bring the gifts (directness, passion and willingness to fight) and let go of the deference to ‘superiors’ and the old label of ‘ignorant.’” He assures us there are guidebooks to help us learn to work together. He cites Betsy Leondar-Wright’s book ***Class Matters*** as abundant with quotes and anecdotes. He also tells us that Linda Stout, who comes from many generations of Quakers, now leads the organization Spirit in Action and that her book ***Bridging the Class Divide*** is a great source

of inspiration.

There are many more resources for Friends. An online search will reveal George’s FGC 2011 plenary address, “Conflict as a Gift of the Spirit,” and “New Theory, Old Practice: Nonviolence and Quakers,” which offers tools for social change. There’s also the amazing Global Nonviolent Database at Swarthmore College: <http://bit.ly/J3jeLx>.

In the struggle for ecological justice, which is integral to human justice, we have now seen the victims’ faces from 34 U.S. states and around the world, animal stillbirths, destroyed land values, air pollution in Wyoming, the industrialization of the beloved landscape. Friends are needed in this struggle.

Don’t give up your leading That’s what I always tell Friends when we are talking about Earthcare issues

by David Millar
Montreal Monthly Meeting, Canadian YM

Don’t feel guilty. Don’t feel overwhelmed. If you choose just one area of Earthcare you care about (a list of possible topics is given below) and work on it with your local peace/eco-justice, interfaith or Transition group, you can begin, along with others who have similar leadings, to invest your energy in actions that can make a difference.

For instance, if peace is your main concern, a little thought will show you that peace without a planet is impossible, and vice versa. You might feel led to reflect on questions like, How can peace be built? What can we learn of conflict prevention, and reconciliation, from the Alternatives to Violence Project, and from the work of African Peace Teams? Exploring questions like these and inviting clarity for action will become

extremely important in a world where severe shortages of energy, food, water, and other resources are becoming extremely likely.

If your interest is gardening or art, you might be drawn to helping improve conditions in your local city. You might explore how to develop local food sources, encourage urban agriculture, and share ideas about permaculture. Or, if quality of life is to replace quantity of goods in a mass consumer society, local celebrations and local artists will contribute joy to daily life, and this kind of local planning needs hands, hearts, and minds like yours

I have developed an open Google Docs resource called *What Can We Do?* (<http://tinyurl.com/cylo5tl>) that compiles a list of positive Earthcare goals and proposals, based on more than 100 NGO source documents, FWCC consultations, and faith-based declarations. Some objectives in the document might seem utopian, but they are a standard by which we can measure progress. If you are having a hard time finding others in

Leading, see page 13 >>

A Friendly Interview with the New QEW Publications Coordinator

by Louis Cox
Outgoing QEW Publications Coordinator

KATHERINE MURRAY of Indianapolis, Indiana, began work as the new Publications Coordinator for QEW on November 26, 2012. She takes over from Louis Cox of Charlotte, Vermont, who for 22 years did most of the volunteer and paid publications and website work for QEW.

Although Katherine has been a technical writer and editor for most of her working life, it wasn't until a few years ago that she was able to begin integrating paid work with her love for nature and her concern for ecological sustainability.

"Doing research for a book titled *Green Home Computing for Dummies* was an eye-opening experience. It gave me a sense of how big the challenges are and how blind most people can be in a consumer-driven society. When there isn't a sense of spiritual enoughness, people don't stop to think about all the costs and ramifications of their consumer choices."

Katherine said she first encountered the divine in nature while playing and exploring in natural settings as a child. "I remember being told about God during 'religious education' in school and thinking, 'I already know this per-

son, but not in this form. This is who I know from the woods.' Later in life I came to understand this spiritual presence in terms of Buber's I-Thou relationship and Schweitzer's Reverence for all life."

This same holistic outlook informs the way she teaches her Eco-spirituality course at Earlham School of Religion. "The goal is to help students learn how to get in touch with the created world." Students read writings from Rachel Carson and Wendell Berry to Thomas Berry and Joanna Macy, consider care for Earth through Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Islamic lenses, and consider ideas ranging from eco-



Katherine Murray

feminism and eco-justice to Native American spirituality and the interplay of spirituality and science. And, says Katherine, "Annie Leonard's animated video, *The Story of Stuff*, always blows the socks off of everybody."

While working for a small publishing company, Katherine was in charge of designing and writing various kinds of brochures, which was good preparation for the kind of publications work she will be doing for Quaker Earthcare Witness. She enjoyed editing ESR's 12-page newsletter,

Murray, page 13 >>

Sustainability and QEW

by Anne Mitchell, General Secretary

HELLO, FRIENDS. AS YOU KNOW, QEW is a network of North American Friends and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world from a spiritual perspective, emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies. QEW has grown over the last 25 years with a deepening sense of urgency on climate issues, and as you'll read in this issue of *BeFriending Creation*, we are continuing to grow and extend our reach. Now, as we enter this stage of growth, is the right time to stabilize our financial support. QEW has a general secretary and other part-time staff. The Steering Committee includes representatives sent from many yearly meetings.

Maintaining an organization like QEW always requires financial support. Friends have been generous in their support of the organization over the last 25 years—and many of you have received and contributed to our annual appeal (thank you!). We are now seeking to stabilize the finances as we focus on critical issues facing the world today. Rather than asking donors to support a major fund drive to build reserves, we have chosen to ask supporters to make a three-year commitment of a much more modest contribution. This will give us a predictable stream of income that will make



our operation much more effective.

Our goal is to find 50 people—or the equivalent of 50 people—who will contribute \$100 a month for three years. Many Steering Committee members have taken it upon themselves to approach their meetings to find the equivalent of at least one \$100 contributor. They may choose to bundle contributions to help us obtain our goal. For example, they may find five people willing to commit \$20 per month for three years, or 10 people willing to commit \$10 per month for three years. Creativity is welcome! We hope you will support these efforts or efforts in your own meeting if you feel so led.

If you are willing to assist us in this important endeavor and you're in the U.S., please send your monthly payment to QEW, 173B N Prospect Street, Burlington, VT 05401-1607. You can also donate through our website at www.quakerearthcare.org. Please mark the payments as "3 year fund" so that we can track those commitments.

Supporters in Canada, please make your cheque payable to CFSC and mail it to 60 Lowther Avenue, Toronto, ON M5R 1C7, or log on to Canada Helps (www.canada-helps.org/), find CFSC, and then earmark your donation to QEW. Thank you so much for joining with us in this work!



SEYM Peace & Social Concerns Website

Friends in Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) have created and maintain a resource-rich Peace & Social Concerns website at <http://seympeace.org>. You'll find reflections, recommended reading, links to newsletters and updates, and connections to additional organizations concerned with peace and social justice issues.



Friend's Video on YouTube

Julia Freehand has recently had a public showing of her YouTube video, *We Are Water and Energy Too*. Julia says, "It was shown at the Squeaky Wheel new members' show here last Friday. All-in-all, there were 12 interesting videos shown in 45 minutes. It was such a very nice experience. Enjoy." You can watch the video by going to <http://youtu.be/HH7e6dt27J8>.



Inspiring Video about Our Home

Friend Farzaneh Izadi sends in a recommendation for the video *Home*, produced by Luc Besson and narrated by Glenn Close in 2009. The video was filmed in 54 countries and presents gorgeous aerial views of planet Earth from more than 120 locations around the globe. In the midst of breathtaking beauty—thanks to the talents of internationally renowned photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand—we get the clear message that the

time is now to get honest about our patterns of consumption and make important changes before we damage our home beyond repair.

Murray, from page 12

which is similar in style to the newsletter that she is now editing for QEWS.

In her earlier work in publications, grant proposal writing, and consulting for non-profit organizations, Katherine learned a lot about marketing publications and raising funds. She intends to make use of social

media and will be on the lookout for opportunities to promote QEWS publications and help QEWS supporters spread the word.

On the other hand, Katherine doesn't see herself as promoting a personal agenda. "I will trust God to light my way forward; I will be thrilled when any of my experiences and skills can be of use to QEWS."

Leading, from page 11

your area who share your concerns, send a query to QEWS discussions. I bet at least three others in North America would connect with you and perhaps set up an online group around that interest. You could use *What Can We Do?* in your group and propose updates. Send changes to [fdmiller@gmail.com](mailto:fdmillar@gmail.com) and I will compile them and update the living document.

How could this work? Keith Helmuth's idea for Circles of Discernment offers one promising approach: <http://tinyurl.com/b2ms8wm>.

Yes, there is much to do, and it can be overwhelming for one person. But working in community with those who have complementary leadings is one answer. And doing what you can, right here, right now, is another. Choose ONE flower and let it bloom.

BeFriending Creation

BeFriending Creation, Vol. 26, No. 1, January - February 2013. Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**. ISSN 1050-0332. Published bi-monthly.

We publish **BeFriending Creation** to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, and news of our actions, and encourage among Friends a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation. Opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Quaker Earthcare Witness, or of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Submission deadlines are February 7, April 7, June 7, August 7, October 7, and December 7.

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VISION AND WITNESS

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God. WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity. WE PROMOTE these truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

Steering Committee Clerk Shelley Tanenbaum, <sbellian@pacbell.net>.

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Website: <www.QuakerEarthcare.org>

Earthcare Calendar

February 7, 2013. Deadline for article submissions for March - April 2013 *BeFriending Creation*.

May 2, 2013. Deadline for applications for QEWS Mini-Grants for Meeting environmental projects.

BeFriending Creation January – February 2013

Quaker Earthcare Witness
173-B North. Prospect Street
Burlington, VT 05401-1607 USA

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Queries on Faith and Genetics

Submitted by Anne Mitchell



QUERIES ON FAITH AND GENETICS were approved by Canada Yearly Meeting in August 2012. You can find out more by visiting www.councilofchurches.org.

The following queries are intended to be attached to the Curriculum on Faith and Genetics currently being finalized by the Biotechnology Reference Group of the Canadian Council of Churches. The faith groups involved in this project have each been invited to contribute an appendix expressing their particular perspective on the issue.

Quakers believe that “there is that of God in everyone.” And many also believe that this includes the natural world. In the 21st century, as we contemplate the rapid development of biotechnologies and genetics, how should Quakers respond?

During the 1700s Quakers adopted a set of queries as a form of guidance intended to help them direct their thoughts when seeking their way in the world. These queries have been augmented and reworded as time passed and have proved their worth through to the present day. Using the same approach, the following Queries on Faith and Genetics are offered for worship, prayer, discernment, and discussion.

Queries of a General Nature:

1. How does God’s presence in each one of us act as teacher and lead us to act in ways that lead to the betterment of people?
2. The potential to do good in the world and leave it better is present in all of us. As we live out that potential, how can we take into account self interest?
3. What must people of faith do to protect and to maintain hope for the potential good that can come from genetics and technological development?

Queries bearing on Genetics and Technology:

4. What criteria should we use to judge the positive and negative aspects of genetically related technological change?
5. As your congregation (Meeting) studies and prayerfully considers technological change, how do you include its impact on reproduction, on men’s and women’s bodies, their role in families and society, and on those with special needs?
6. How can we evaluate the positive and negative effects of reproductive technologies on the lives of individuals, on families and on society?
7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of particular technologies for individuals, families, local and global human society, and for all other life?